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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000947

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ANP'S WALI KHAN PRAISES MILITARY SUCCESSES

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Classified By: CDA Gerald Feierstein, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Awami National Party President Asfandyar Wali Khan told Charge May 3 that he was pleased (for the first time) with vigorous Army/Frontier Corps action against militants in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). GOP forces were moving into Shangla, completing the encirclement of Swat in preparation to move against militants within the Swat Valley. The NWFP provincial government had met for the last time with TNSM leader Sufi Mohammed; they were proceeding with implementing the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation so the government--not Sufi--would get the credit for responding to popular concern for "swift justice." He claimed his strategy of separating the populace from the militants had worked, and there was now widespread support for military action. Wali Khan said to control extremism in NWFP required that the GOP go after militants in the Waziristans. He warned that the consequences of current GOP military action would be increased militant attacks in the settled areas of Pakistan and more cross-border attacks on U.S./NATO forces in Afghanistan because Waziri militants allied with Mullah Omar were preparing for a summer campaign. While disagreeing on modalities, Wali Khan shared USG concern for the need to control ethnic/political violence in Karachi and to replace the current NWFP governor. End Summary.

Military Action/Nizam-e-Adl

¶2. (C) Awami National Party (ANP) leader Asfandyar Wali Khan met May 3 with Charge and A/DCM for and hour an half. Wali Khan said that for the first time, Pakistani security forces were doing their job in eliminating extremism in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). When locals pointed out militant locations the security forces were going after them instead of alerting them to flee, as they had done in the past. He reported that GOP forces had moved to Shangla and were closing the noose on Swat, where Wali Khan expected Army action to begin shortly. Once the Army cleaned up the area, however, they could not become an occupying force. Wali Khan expressed great concern about what force would hold the area; Charge outlined USG offers to repair/harden police stations and train and equip the NWFP Elite Police Force and said we had been frustrated at the inability of the national or provincial governments to provide us a needs assessment or access. Wali Khan said he was meeting with NWFP Chief Minister Hoti later in the day and would get us a response.

¶3. (C) Wali Khan confirmed that the NWFP government would

proceed with implementing the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation (NAR) so the government, not TNSM leader Sufi Mohammed, would get the credit. This was about responding to decades-old popular requests for "swift justice." The press reported that the NWFP government unilaterally established the Darul Qaza (appeals) courts May 2 and had nominated two Peshawar High Court justices to serve in these appeals courts in Malakand Division. Sufi is reported to have opposed this unilateral NAR implementation. Wali Khan said that the NWFP's May 2 meeting with Sufi Mohammed (which has been widely criticized in the local media) was their last meeting.

Washington Visit

¶4. (C) Wali Khan reported that President Zardari had invited him to go to Washington for the bilateral/trilateral meetings next week, but the GOP also had committed that the leader of the National Assembly's Foreign Policy Committee would attend a counterparts meeting in Turkey the same week. "If I do not go," said Wali Khan, "that would mean Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader Fazlur Rehman would represent Pakistan"; Zardari had agreed that this was not in their interest. Wali Khan said he would be happy to visit Washington if invited in the coming weeks or months.

Karachi Violence

¶5. (C) Charge raised U.S. concern about escalating Pashtun/ANP-Muhajir/Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) violence in Karachi. Wali Khan relayed his recent conversation with MQM leader Altaf Hussain in which Wali Khan said bluntly that MQM was going to have to become accustomed to greater numbers and powers of Pashtuns in Karachi. It was in both MQM and

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ANP interests to prevent conflict and avoid the blame game. He suggested that some of the violence was started by other parties (e.g., Jamaat Islami or the Balochis) that benefited from MQM-ANP conflict. Charge pressed again on the need for peaceful resolution of ANP-MQM differences, especially given the upcoming May 12 anniversary of a bloody inter-party clash.

NWFP Governor

¶6. (C) Wali Khan agreed there was an urgent need to replace NWFP Governor Ghani and said that GOP negotiations had been ongoing for some months with Azam Khan, a former NWFP Chief Secretary. Wali Khan felt that he was the best candidate precisely because he was non-political and had extensive experience as a bureaucrat in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Anwar Saifullah, an alternate candidate being considered by President Zardari, was rich and well-connected but as a PPP politician could upset the delicate PPP-ANP relations within the NWFP government. Making clear that past difference still rankled, Wali discounted Saifullah's pledge to respect the Hoti government's electoral mandate, recalling that Saifullah had tried to maneuver into the Chief Minister's chair after last year's election even though the ANP enjoyed a clear parliamentary edge. If neither could be appointed, Wali Khan suggested that perhaps retired Lt General Imran Ullah Khan, a Pashtun appointed by Benazir Bhutto as Balochistan governor in 1994, could be a compromise candidate.

Consequences & Drones

¶7. (C) The Army/Frontier Corps had to finish operations in Swat, Buner and Dir and then move on to the FATA, said Wali Khan. It was clear that the heart of the problem was in the Waziristans, which had openly declared allegiance to Mullah Omar. The GOP could not protect the NWFP from militancy without clearing the Waziristans. Wali Khan said there would be two consequences to these military operations--increased

militant attacks inside the settled areas of Pakistan and increased cross-border attacks on U.S./NATO forces. The militants in Waziristan were gearing up for a summer offensive, and the U.S. should be prepared, warned Wali Khan, that the price of encouraging the GOP to shut down militancy in Pakistan would spill over into Afghanistan.

18. (C) Claiming his strategy of separating the population from the militants in Swat had worked, Wali Khan said that the key to counter-insurgency strategy was winning the hearts and minds of the people. The people in the Waziristans, he noted, have never protested U.S. drone attacks because they know the GOP has no way to stop extremism there without drones. The only ones protesting drones were intellectual liberals sitting in Lahore and Islamabad.

19. (C) Comment: Wali Khan consistently has been critical of the lack of Army will/capability to carry out operations against militants, so his new-found praise is welcome news. It indicates that, despite a lack of training and equipment, the Pakistani Army/Frontier Corps can conduct counter-insurgency operations when it truly wants to. Whether they succeed in holding cleared areas, however, remains to be seen. We suspect Wali Khan's decision to decline Zardari's invitation to Washington had more to do with avoiding USG criticism of ANP's deal with Sufi Mohammad than his desire to represent Pakistan in Ankara.

FEIERSTEIN